

VALLEY WOMEN'S VOICE

DECEMBER 1988

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A Chronicle of Feminist Thought & Action

Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism: Empowerment through Magic

by Peg Aloi

The prevailing mythology of our race assumes that we are slowly surely destroying ourselves. Environmental activists and New Age teachings aside, research on ozone depletion tells us that things will get worse before they get better, particularly while we continue to spray aerosols and take styrofoam with our coffee. Then there are the unstable relations we enjoy with most other major world powers. It is enough to make the most optimistic of women at least occasionally discouraged, if not chronically doubtful or depressed.

Some people, to stave off a feeling of helplessness or apathy, embrace activism and social causes, channelling their energies into efforts to help the less fortunate in our world, those for whom basic survival is an awesome task (the poor, the sick, the hungry, the elderly, the oppressed). Then, there are other folks who turn to religion, to faith in a higher power that will reassure and guide them through everyday existence in the 1980's. But it is not surprising that, as women, we often reject the notion of a male deity, and often even renounce the religious tenets we have grown up with. This rejection is directly related to our disillusionment with political leaders, with the job market, with education: in short, with all the things that centuries of patriarchal domination has dictated as societal "norms."

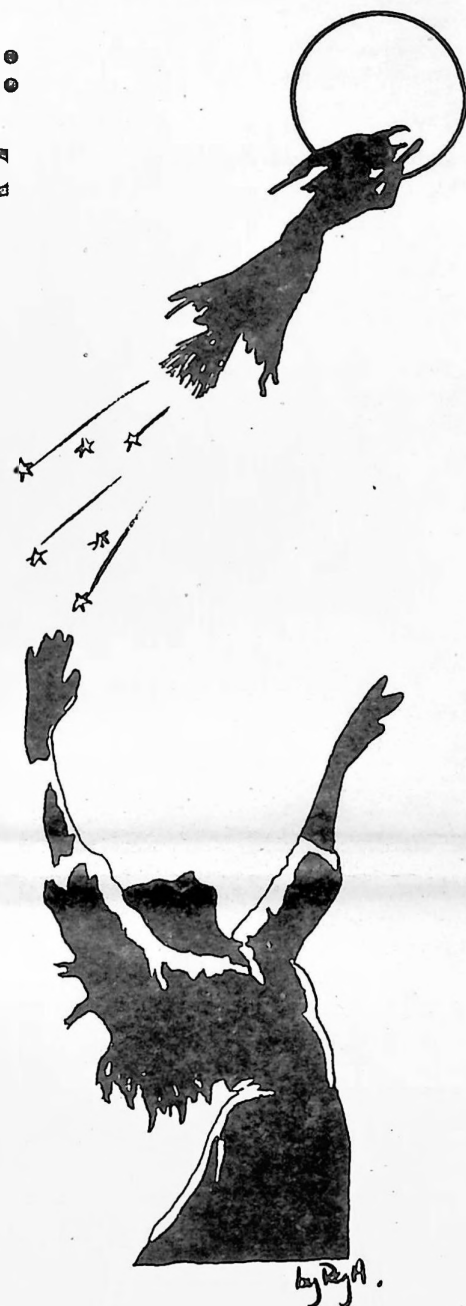
There is a path for women and men concerned with the environment, with the fate of the planet and its inhabitants, and with their own individual position in the matrix of life. You've seen books on witchcraft, Wicca, Neo-Paganism, Goddess worship, the Feminist Tarot, in bookstores-sometimes in the Occult section, sometimes in Women's Issues, and occasionally, Religion, depending on the bookseller. You've seen posters advertising a "Witch's Costume Ball" that is chem-free and usually open to women only. You've seen flyers offering workshops on herbal healing. You see women (and men) wearing jewelry featuring crescent moons and pentagrams. You have been curious about what you've seen, maybe so curious as to ask someone what she *means* by wearing a pin that says "Witches Heal." Aren't "witches" evil, after all? Don't they cast spells on people, ride around on brooms, sacrifice small animals at midnight rituals? Weren't women hanged, burned, stoned to death, centuries ago, for practicing witchcraft?

There is probably no greater source of frustration (or humor) for a contemporary witch than to be subjected to people who are uninformed or prejudiced about

just what The Craft, as it is called, is all about. Yes, women (and some men) were hanged as witches in the late Seventeenth Century in and around Salem, Massachusetts. Many more people were executed in Europe over a much longer period of time in the Dark Ages. This association we all carry with us, this knowledge of a heinous period in our history when women were accused, tried, and executed as "witches" colors, to this day, our understanding of The Craft.

We have certainly come a long way (I refuse to say "baby") since those early days of suspicion and ignorance, and religious persecution is in many respects a thing of the past. Certainly, we cannot ignore the "witch-hunt" tactics of white supremacist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, or Pro-Life extremists such as those involved in "Operation Rescue," so it is perhaps ludicrous to assume that any women who calls herself a "witch" will not be subject to ridicule or ostracism. It is helpful to keep in mind, however, that most witches, Wiccans, Druids, and Neo-Pagans are very open-minded, pluralistic, and oriented towards knowledge, psychic balance of self-efficacy, and thus most have become fairly adept at handling the occasional wisecrack, like "Can you ride a broom?"

Neo-Pagan implies a rebirth, a "newness." While it is true that there has actually been a sort of revival of interest in these religions of the Mother Goddess, many people tend to forget that pagans were around before Christians. Ancient Celtic sects of Druids trace their roots back far earlier than Joseph of Arimathea, the Bible, or the early Christian Crusades. Have you ever wondered why Christmas falls so near the Winter Solstice? Why Hallowe'en is followed immediately by All Soul's Day? Early peasants (sometimes called "heathens" because they lived on heaths or grassy hills) were pagans who believed in many gods and goddesses, and especially placed emphasis on the concept of the Great Mother, the Earth, from which all things come and to which all things return. Early attempts by Christian leaders to convert these peasants to Christianity failed, because their reality was grounded in the Earth, in their way of life, which revolved around the seasons of the year and the planting and harvesting of crops. By placing Christmas so close to the Winter Solstice (December 22, a pagan holiday that celebrates the Earth's period of dormancy while She prepares for Spring's rebirth), Christians were gradually able to coerce peasants into believing that the two holidays were the same, although the monotheistic belief in one God



contradicts the plurality taught by paganism. If this analysis seems far-fetched, ask yourself: Why is a holiday which supposedly commemorates the birth of Christ celebrated with traditions that are saturated with images such as trees, reindeer, wreaths, holly (an important component of Druidical magic) and the offering of gifts (originally meant to honor the Goddess for a fruitful harvest)? Christian dogma has so brainwashed most people that they assume Christianity was the first religion that ever existed. In terms of planetary age, it is very young, indeed.

Whew! Enough history for today. (I may write a future article detailing the historic trials of Salem.)

The best advice I can offer to aspiring participants in The Craft is to follow up on all those leads that come your way. Paganism is alive and well in the Pioneer Valley (probably for the same reason that there are more art films shown per capita, and more subscriptions to the Greenpeace newsletter, than in most communities this size--is it something in the water?). If you see posters advertising herbal workshops, or local pagan organizations, copy the phone number down! If you see a pin that says "Witches Heal," ask the wearer to have a cup of tea with you (she might say yes). One thing: if someone

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LETTERS

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MOTHER EARTH BULLETIN

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Happy Birthday Alice! And special thanks to Sherry for feeding us on a desolate production afternoon

Dear Valley Women's Voice:

Although I agreed with the basic premises put forth by Ingrid Newkirk in "Animal Rights and the Feminist Connection" (yes, the treatment of animals in this country is often shameful, and indeed, we as feminists must try to consider all living things in our fight to end oppression). I found myself annoyed as well by the article > she began by implying that regarding animals as "less intelligent" is just repeating the sins of the society which justified its oppression of women this way. But the problem with considering women to be less intelligent than men is that we are not. The distinction itself is not inherently wrong. Mice are less intelligent than people. That's fact, not politics. Granted, there is danger in making the leap that intelligence is the sole criterion for judging worth, but then this is what should be criticized, not the judgment itself.

One could then claim that all living beings are equally "valuable" and deserving of their rights. This strikes me as an easy way out of a tough issue. The reality is, we all have some system, maybe on a nonconscious level, of rating the value of different living things. We kill mosquitos more easily than cows. Why? Most would be willing to sacrifice 1000 mice for a cure for AIDS, or a fetus for a woman's life. Which criteria are acceptable in making these choices? Intelligence? Capacity for emotion? It is clearly not as simple as claiming that all life is to be respected.

I was bothered as well by many of Newkirk's analogies: witch burnings are like killing animals for science. Gang rape is like hunting. Why is it that we withhold all sympathy for the oppression people have suffered unless they themselves lead completely exemplary lives? I have often heard it said that Jews had no right to expect any sympathy for their suffering at the hands of the Nazis if they express opinions or exhibit behaviors that smack of the possibility of prejudice.

Now Newkirk implies that women who mistreat animals are no better than those who burned the witches. I don't buy it. Mistreating animals is lousy. Murdering women is worse.

Celia M. Klin

Dear Editor[s].

Three cheers for Senator John Olver for

sponsoring the Child Care Linkage Bill, which if passed would require most developers who build or renovate more than 50,000 square feet of space to construct an on-site or near-site child-care center, or pay an in-lieu child-care fee into a special fund.

Currently, only one in two-thousand employers nationwide provides child-care benefits, and only one-third of Massachusetts families needing child-care are able to find it at a cost they can reasonably afford.

It is working parents and community residents who obviously would benefit from this bill. Yet a study conducted by the National Employer Supported Child Care Project in 1982 revealed that businesses too have much to gain. Of the human resource managers surveyed, 90% said that child care had a positive impact on morale, 85% said it helped recruitment, and more than half agreed that on-site care reduces turnover and absenteeism.

The Child Care Linkage Bill (H.6023) passed in the House of Representatives last July. Smith College MASSPIRG firmly supports this bill and urges all concerned parents, businesspeople and community members to voice their support now by writing to: Senate President William Bulger, Massachusetts State House -- Room 330, Boston, MA 02133

Smith College MASSPIRG Child Care Committee
(Signed by six members)

To the Editors:

On Friday, October 28 a rally in support of Dukakis/Bentsen was held at Mount Holyoke college. This rally was disrupted by several UMASS Republicans; among them, the only one who identified himself was W. Greg Rothman. The group entered waving Bush/Quale signs and began chanting pro-Bush slogans with a megaphone. We were indoors; the use of a megaphone was totally unnecessary. We responded with pro-Dukakis chants, and their chants turned into a recitation of the pledge of Allegiance. Duke supporters joined in; it was probably the only thing that both groups had in common. Then the men in the group began shouting about Bush's "pro-life" stance. Now somebody should have told Mr. Rothman and his friends that you don't go to a

• Letters continued on next page

POLICY STATEMENT

The Valley Women's Voice, a monthly feminist newsjournal, welcomes women's writings, poetry, graphics, and photography that reflect a feminist commitment to the empowerment of all women. The Voice provides a forum for women to share challenging and controversial ideas; vital information and resources; lively humor, rage, celebration, struggle; and an increasing awareness of and respect for diversity among women. We aim to communicate and strengthen bonds between women by making them visible in our pages.

The Valley Women's Voice is produced

on a collective, consensus, volunteer basis by a group of feminists who disagree on as many things as we agree on. We often do not agree with all opinions expressed in the Voice by individual authors, but we accept responsibility for choosing to print everything in the paper.

Although we have created the Valley Women's Voice with fairly clear ideas about what we want this newsjournal to be, we also view it as an ongoing opportunity for all of us--readers and collective members--to learn more about ourselves, each other, and the many truths of feminism.

CONTRIBUTION GUIDELINES

The Valley Women's Voice welcomes letters, essays, narratives, interviews, newsbriefs, poems, short stories, cartoons, graphics, and photographs. Written submissions should be 3 to 5 pages typed, double spaced. Your name, address, and phone number must be enclosed with all materials so that we may verify submissions and/or contact you to discuss any necessary editorial changes. A short biographical statement is also appreciated. An author who--for reasons of confidentiality--does not wish her name to be printed should indicate this when submitting items. Please enclose a SASE if you would like materials returned to you.

The decision to print materials is made collectively, and all major editorial changes are made in conjunction with the author. Although we cannot afford to pay contributors, we do send a complimentary copy of the issue in which your item appears.

Send submissions to: Valley Women's Voice, 321 Student Union Building, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003. If you have ideas for future articles, or are not sure how your particular interests and talents may add to the paper, call us and let's discuss the possibilities. Our number is (413) 545-2436.

CALENDAR & ANNOUNCEMENT LISTINGS

The Valley Women's Voice would like to print announcements and publicize events of interest to women. Listings are free and should be kept to 5 lines in length. (Items will be edited to fit space constraints.) Announcements for non-profit organizations will be given preference and additional space when it is available.

We request that Calendar listings provide the following information: name, date, time, and location of the event; cost of attending the event (sliding scale? work exchange?); the sponsor of the event and recipient of proceeds, if any; a statement about accessibility for disabled women, if applicable.

ASL interpreted?); a phone number where inquiries may be directed.

Individuals and organizations may request that a photograph be printed along with a Calendar listing. A nominal fee is charged to cover printing costs. Only black-and-white photographs can be accepted. Due to space constraints, we may not be able to accept all photographs for publication, and preference will be given to entries from non-profit and local organizations. For more information, contact our Calendar Editor at (413) 545-2436.

Announcement and calendar listings must be submitted in writing by the 20th of the month preceding publication.

DISPLAY RATES

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DEADLINE

All materials for the FEBRUARY issue must be received by JANUARY 20 1988. NO JANUARY ISSUE--we need a vacation!

On Being a Woman-Identified Woman Living with Men

by Debbie Connolly

What does it mean to be a woman identified woman? Obviously the concept and the reality are subject to different interpretations. However, an overwhelming amount of the interpretations assert that "true" woman identification is defined by a lesbian lifestyle. Some feminist theorists see relationships with men as necessarily draining female empowerment. I would argue that this is a narrow and alienating concept that is detrimental to the entire women's movement.

Woman identification is certainly tied to one's relationships with other women but more fundamentally it is tied to the entire space in which a woman lives and interacts. For many women this space includes men. For lesbians this interaction with men may be fairly superficial, although not necessarily so, but for heterosexual women this interaction is experienced on all levels: intellectual, emotional, physical, and sexual. Does this make heterosexual women innately feminist traitors who are nurturing and allying with their own oppressors? Certainly not. A woman who identifies herself is a woman identified woman and should not need anyone to validate her position.

Just as the patriarchal assertion that heterosexuality is the only option is oppressive, similarly the assertion that homosexuality is the only acceptable choice is also limiting and divisive. The essential transformation from patriarchal thought on sexuality to feminist thought needs to be a liberating one. True sexual liberation would be a society where every individual is free to make sexual choices without pressures of prevailing conceptions or definitions of

a norm.

With this ideal premise of free sexual will the question in feminist thought would then be, do women's relationships with men inevitably oppress and divide women? Can a woman be a feminist while maintaining emotional and sexual ties to men? Are men the evil enemy of women or is patriarchy? Or, are men and patriarchy inextricably combined? In partial response to these questions one must bear in mind that neither men nor heterosexual relationships are inherently oppressive by the nature of their biology.

Heterosexual relationships have the same potential for egalitarianism that homosexual relationships do. On the same token, homosexual relationships have the same oppressive potential as heterosexual ones. Any argument contrary to this is operating on the premise that men and women are not biologically equals and such a deterministic view is utterly unfounded. It is cultural conventions and internalized patriarchy that creates such imbalances and it takes work to overcome them on individual and societal levels. The need for this work applies to virtually everyone to some degree.

A true utopia would be when all people are truly free and equal through the elimination of race, class, and gender boundaries. Men, making up one half of the population, are essential in working towards that transformation. Men need to be educated and to educate themselves about the injustices of patriarchy in the same way that caucasians need to deny power to white supremacy despite superficial benefits. Other separatist feminist utopias or exclusively women societies are alienating economically and emotionally

to vast numbers of women and only deal with surface problems not the roots.

Separatist ideals and the many divided schools of feminist thought are dangerous and weakening. The definition of feminism needs to be opened up to include an entire spectrum of women from liberal to radical. After that change, those labels and schools will be unnecessary. There are plenty of already developed definitions for women that we are trying to break through and discard. As feminist women we need to concentrate on not creating more. Women have the same dangerous potential for silencing other women's voices as men have done to us in the past. All voices must be heard and valued for what they are, not ostracized for what they are not.

I love women and men. This need not be threatening to my feminist identity. I have particular loyalties and attachments to women with whom I am close. Similarly, I am close with individual men. I live with and share my sexuality with a man; this choice I make with the same self-pride and love that I assert in my relations with women. Feminists who argue that heterosexual women will always turn against their sisters over their male partners are unrealistically judgmental. Everyone develops loyalties to whomever they love and makes priorities accordingly. While being a woman identified woman means having a refined woman-centered consciousness, it need not be with the exclusion of men. Heterosexual feminists and all women need to empower and define ourselves. This is a project centered upon one's self and on relations with other women, but it need not be limited to a lifestyle that encompasses only that. Let's not substitute male identifications for female ones.

• Letters continued from previous page

women's college and tell the people there how great a candidate is when he wants to arbitrarily take away their freedom of choice.

Finally, a member of the Mount Holyoke faculty who happened to be present stood up and called for an end to the shouting match, and made a plea to engage in a constructive dialogue that would better reflect the intellectual atmosphere that one would expect in a college environment. Basically, he said, what had been going on for the past ten minutes was reflective of the Republican party's entire attitude toward conducting a campaign, and that they were interrupting our free exercise of our first amendment rights. His words were met with chants of "Homo! Homo!" That, for me, was the breaking point.

First of all, it epitomized their anti-intellectual approach to the rally. Essentially, they were saying, "You don't agree with me, therefore you must be some kinda freak." Their words were not only unfounded, but also completely irrelevant. A man's or woman's sexual orientation has nothing to do with his or her intellectual ability and capacity to engage in a political discussion, nor should it have anything to do with it.

Furthermore, the use of the word "Homo!" was something I found patently offensive. Although I myself am not homosexual, friends of mine are, and I consider the use of the word "homosexual" in a derogatory context to be inappropriate, at the very least. Their willingness to label a man a homosexual and subsequently abuse him for it displays a hatred that is equivalent to calling a person of color a nigger, both in its senselessness and in its show of ignorance.

Above all, however, the most appalling aspect of

their behavior was their insulting our faculty. I don't care what anyone says, whether or not you agree with what he said, the verbal abuse of a faculty member is totally inexcusable.

It is my understanding that Mr. Rothman has been barred from the UMASS campus. Fine. However, I would demand that he and his cohorts come forward again, this time to apologize not only to Peter Scott of the Mount Holyoke College Russian department, but also to the homosexual community. This group's behavior in general displayed the intellectual agility of a tree stump, ignorance, intolerance and hatred which can not be allowed to rest without facing consequences.

Margaret F. Judy
MHC 1991

This letter was sent in November to the Lesbian Calendar, who declined to print it.

Dear Pam and Marie,

The Valley Women's Voice collective has decided to discontinue our advertising exchange with the Calendar. While we regret withdrawing our ad from the Calendar - ideally we'd like to support, and be supported by, lesbian businesses and publications - we feel that it is necessary for us to do so at this time. We consider the Calendar's slanderous conjectures about individual members of the lesbian community irresponsible and oppressive. We also take issue with

several unsubstantiated claims made by the Calendar in its most recent (October) issue.

The Calendar has accepted approximately \$150.00 from the Valley Gay Alliance, an organization whose membership is currently all-male (Aug., pg. 1, "The Calendar/VGA Dinner/Dance Report"). While you profess a separatist stance - "This publication is not for men, we do not want men to read it, support it, have access to it, or even know about it" - it is inconsistent to co-sponsor a fund-raising event with, and then accept money from, a male organization. However, once you have done so, it is rude and dishonest to repudiate your affiliation with these supportive gay men.

Furthermore, a publication which claims to be a "safe" place for lesbians to "network and communicate" - "We (the Calendar) exist because there has never been a publication in the Valley where it was safe for lesbians to publicize our events, network and communicate with each other" (Oct. issue, Letters) - cannot at the same time, censor certain lesbian voices (July, p. 4, Letters). The unethical exclusion from the Calendar of lesbians whose politics are not in accord with the politics of the editors/owners amounts to a serious abuse of power.

Until the Calendar stops randomly asserting its hidden editorial policy, it will not be a safe space for all lesbians. In all fairness, the Calendar has a responsibility to present the community with a clear, honest policy statement. Our community deserves it.

Martha Grigg
Alice K. Stanislawsky
Jeanne M. Wallace
for the VWV Collective

Deliah Rosel
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MOTHER EARTH BULLETIN

Today's Soup: Chemical with Bits of Beluga

Millions of dollars were spent to save two ice-bound California gray whales in Alaska in a dramatic US-Soviet rescue mission last month. But the 400 white beluga whales of Canada's St. Lawrence River will not be rescued. They are dying from US and Canadian pollution.

Hundreds of international marine biologists, toxicologists, and environmentalists conceded that nothing could be done to save the small white whales who live in what has been called "a chemical soup." Autopsies show the beluga whales carry at least 24 contaminants in their bodies, including PCB's and DDT. The whales suffer from bladder cancer, pulmonary fibrosis, hepatitis, transitional cell carcinoma,

and perforated ulcers. The carcasses of the dead whales are so contaminated with PCB's that, under

Canadian law, they must be treated as toxic waste.

Boston Globe



\$\$\$: Fuck the Forests

President Reagan refused to sign a bill that would have designated 1.43 million acres of Forest Service land in Montana as protected wilderness.

Reagan said in a statement that protecting the wilderness "would injure the economy of Montana. It could cost jobs and eliminate vast mineral development opportunities. It also would reduce the flexibility the federal government needs in managing the nation's natural heritage." **Boston Globe**

Editor's note: Hasn't the federal government managed Nature enough? To the Earth, "mineral development opportunities" means being raped of her richness yet again. Reagan vetoed this bill because he wants the forest available to be controlled, dominated, and abused, by men and machines. Exploiting the wilderness will injure the ecology of Montana and of the whole Earth.

Rain, Rain, Go Away

New Hampshire will join eight other states in a lawsuit against the US Environmental Protection Agency for failing to reduce acid rain under the federal Clean Air Act.

The suit will be the fourth involving New Hampshire in what has become a costly and complex battle over acid rain between the Northeast states, Midwest states, Congress, the Reagan administration, the EPA, Canada, and other countries.

New Hampshire will be joined in the suit by the five other New

England states as well as New York, New Jersey, and Minnesota.

Acid rain is formed when emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide mix with moisture in the atmosphere and fall to the ground in the form of acidic rain, sleet, snow, or fog.

Much of the emissions is said to originate from such sources as coal-fired power plants in the Midwest, and the acid rain that is produced has been blamed for damaging forests, lakes and crops, and endangering public health throughout the Northeast and Canada.

Boston Globe

Plagued by Pollution

By midsummer, seal bodies were scattered along hundreds of miles of North Sea coastline. Of an original population of some 18,000 common seals, probably 12,000 are gone. The virus to which the seals are succumbing is probably canine distemper virus (CDV), but the virus cannot work alone. The accomplice, in this case, is toxic pollution.

Today, the North Sea is a sink for some 15 billion gallons of waste water each year. Swimming in this chemical-laden ocean damages the animals' immune systems; diseases that the seals would normally recover from become fatal.

The list of chemicals and toxins being dumped into the ocean is appalling: 450,000 tons of phosphates and nitrates, 50 tons of cadmium, 20 tons of mercury, 12 tons of copper, 10 tons of lead, 7,000 tons of zinc, 300 tons of arsenic, 30,000 tons of toxic drilling muds, 150 pounds of the pesticide

Lindane, 225 pounds of DDT, 20 million metric tons of sewage, and five million tons of partially treated sewage, to name a few.

On September 7th, Greenpeace activists in London brought a dead baby seal to the steps of 10 Downing Street, the residence of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The previous week, Thatcher had told reporters that she didn't have time to discuss the issue. So far, most of the North Sea states are calling for action, but deeds too often fail to follow words.

Today, 80 percent of the female grey seals in the Baltic are known to be sterile. Roughly three-quarters of all Baltic seals examined show pathological changes in some internal organs and skin. Some researchers suspect that the seals will be extinct by the year 2000.

Greenpeace magazine

The THM's in Amherst

Tests on water in August show levels of a cancer-causing chemical in Amherst water considerably above what is allowed by federal standards. Bad news considering that current allowable levels are thought to be too high.

The problem is tri-halomethanes or THMs, a by-product of the chlorine added to the reservoir water to disinfect it. August is a particularly bad time for THMs because heat promotes their formation, and Amherst was increasing the chlorine then to ensure that water for returning UMass students was bacteria-free.

The federal standard for THMs is 100 parts per billion. The standard is expected to be reduced to 50 by 1995. The average reading in

Amherst was 138.

The THM danger is expected to go away after an expensive new treatment plant is built sometime in the 1990s. Until then, there's a disinfection process that Amherst officials would like to institute called chloramination, but state officials have held up approval. Chloramination involves adding ammonia to the water after chlorination to stop the build-up of THMs. **Amherst Bulletin**

At War with Peaceful Animals

Navy officials said at least two bottle-nosed dolphins in its "secret" program to train marine mammals to detect underwater threats have died in the last year, but denied published reports that the creatures have been abused and mistreated. One dolphin died last month during a research experiment at a naval underwater weapons testing facility in the Pacific Northwest. Another died of pneumonia last fall after being shipped to the Persian Gulf to provide underwater surveillance of an anchored barge used as a command base by the US military during the Iran-Iraq war. Five other dolphins remained "on duty" until May.

A former trainer at the San Diego-based Naval Ocean Systems Command where the program is headquartered recently told a convention of mammal trainers that he had witnessed "specific incidents of abuse, weight loss, corporal punishment, and damage to animals after transport." Two unnamed former trainers said that some dolphins and sea lions in the



program have been blinded or suffered crippling injuries because of poor training procedures and that four dolphins have died in the past 18 months.

The Navy has recently decided to expand the program to train dolphins to protect US submarine bases, with the first experiment planned for the new Trident submarine base at Bangor, Washington, within the next two years.

Hampshire Gazette

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24 Nations Pledge Action

Twenty-four nations, including the Soviet Union, the United States, and the European Community members,

signed a protocol at the Bulgarian capital's national conference center calling for a freeze on nitrogen oxide emissions. But a group of Western European nations said halting the steady climb of nitrogen oxide in the atmosphere is not enough. Deep cuts in emissions from cars, trucks, and power stations have to be made if Europe's forests and lakes are to be saved from destruction by acid rain.

BostonGlobe

Think Twice on Three

Hunters killed 2,979 alligators during Florida's first widespread alligator hunt in 26 years.

Poachers killed 10 elephants in a wildlife sanctuary and hacked off their ivory tusks. The November 12th slaughter in Tsavo National Park brought to 160 the number of elephants killed in Kenya since April.

A Connecticut farmer, Timothy Panteleakos, of Canterbury was arrested on charges of cruelty to animals for allowing 20,000 chickens to die of malnutrition and dehydration.

This year, nearly three million kangaroos will be killed in government-authorized hunts. The hunts are being characterized by the government as "wildlife management" programs, but the primary motive is the lucrative market for kangaroo skins, which are largely used for shoes and other athletic gear.

Boston Globe & Greenpeace Magazine

Old Enough to Know Better

In the first case of its kind in the nation, a Gloucester oil-supply company was indicted by a federal grand jury on a charge of dumping gasoline into a sewer and causing a series of explosions in August. The indictment alleged Progressive Oil Co. Inc. negligently pumped a mixture of gasoline and water from an underground storage tank into a drain leading to the city sewage system. According to the indictment, the company "knew and reasonably should have known" its action "could cause personal injury and property damage."

Individuals could have been charged in the case, but were not because the oil firm cooperated in the investigation and its owner is 88 years old.

Boston Globe

A Matter of Principle

Though tuna-fish sandwiches are good sellers, Good Thyme Deli at One Roundhouse Plaza in Northampton has stopped serving tuna as a way to protest the killing of dolphins in tuna nets.

Hampshire Gazette

Ghana's Women Bleach Skin Despite Health Risk

Skin bleaching continues to be popular among women in this West African country despite warnings from doctors that it is a dangerous fashion.

In the past only prostitutes were known to bleach their faces. However, body-bleaching has become a habit that unites women from all social classes, said the weekly Spectator.

Some women argue that they use bleaching creams and soaps to treat pimples or eczema. However, others say they do it to attract men. Doctors stress that all bleaching creams and soaps contain dangerous compounds and should be used only with medical prescriptions.

The compounds are used in the treatment of certain skin diseases but need to be used extremely carefully, because overdose can weaken the body's capability to withstand stress.

Dr. E.N. Delle says every bleaching

cream is 2.15 percent hydroquinone. This substance, when used over a prolonged period, is transformed into an abnormal pigment inside the skin. Later, black spots appear on the skin, making it look aged and rough.

"Ghanaian women are gradually killing themselves and their unborn babies by bleaching their skins," Dr. Delle said.

Boston Globe

First Woman Justice

Governor Gerald Baliles of Virginia said he will appoint Elizabeth Lacy, a state utility regulator, as the first woman to sit on the seven member Virginia Supreme Court.

The appointment would take effect in

January if confirmed by the General Assembly. Ms. Lacy was appointed three years ago to the state corporation commission, a quasi-judicial agency that sets utility rates.

Boston Globe

A Response to the Pope

By Martha Grigg

On September 30th, Pope John Paul II issued a major document on the status of women that narrowly defines their role in the Roman Catholic church and in secular society. John Paul characterizes female identity in terms of the "vocations" of virginity or motherhood, calling on women to find themselves in their love for others. The pope insists that the feminine identity emerges from a woman's relationship to a man, "in this there is a fundamental affirmation of the woman as a person." Vatican officials claim the document to be "most important as a philosophical framework for discussing women's issues."

New York Times

Introduction

I considered writing a weighty theoretical response to the "Excerpts from Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter 'On the Dignity of Women' (reported from the Vatican in late September), but the volumes I would cite, the wise words of the great wimmin thinkers from our herstory, have long since been consigned to flames, consumed by the fires that consumed their bodies.

Millions of wimmin were burned as "witches" in Europe during the Catholic church's Inquisition. A witch, in case you didn't know, is any woman who is not a virgin or a mother. Virginity and motherhood, the pope informs us, are "the two different vocations of women." The "witches" who were burned by John Paul's predecessors were actually spinsters, rebels, lesbians, feminists, midwives, herbalists, women like you and me. Would you call yourself a witch? Will it matter what you call yourself when the pope stokes up his holy Catholic conflagration and calls you "fire fodder"?

Vatican officials have declared the pope's letter an

"important philosophical framework for discussing women's issues." I suppose, then, that my response to the pope's letter will be greeted as an important philosophical framework for discussing papal issues.

Get Thee to a Monastery: 'On the Tragedy of the Wandering Testicle'

Who let this man out of the monastery anyway? Doesn't he know that reading and writing are occupations too strenuous for the delicate male constitution? And public speaking! It is unseemly that a male would even show his face, unveiled, in public, let alone speak! He has brought shame upon himself, his family, and his brothers in the monastery.

As the male of the species is naturally subservient, it is dangerous for a man to make such a spectacle of himself. That fact that he calls himself 'pope' is a clear indication that he suffers from delusions and hysteria. Such diseases are common among men, caused by a phenomenon known as 'the wandering testicle.' Often one or both of a man's testicles will 'wander' through his body and settle in his brain, triggering insolence, venus envy, and delusions of grandeur. Priestesses and healers alike recommend the removal of the male reproductive organs as a treatment for this condition.

Men who have undergone this treatment are no longer useful to society as sperm donors. It is recommended, therefore, that they retire to a monastery where they may lead a quiet life of contemplation and prayer to the Goddess, the Holy Mother of all Earth's Creatures.

Thus, bearing in mind the best interests of this unfortunate wretch who calls himself 'pope' I urge that some kind of healing-woman relieve him of his troublesome testicles and dismiss him from his duty to society. The ranting lunatic may then resign himself to a proper life of silence, obedience, and chastity.

The author is a woman-loving woman, and a "firefighter."



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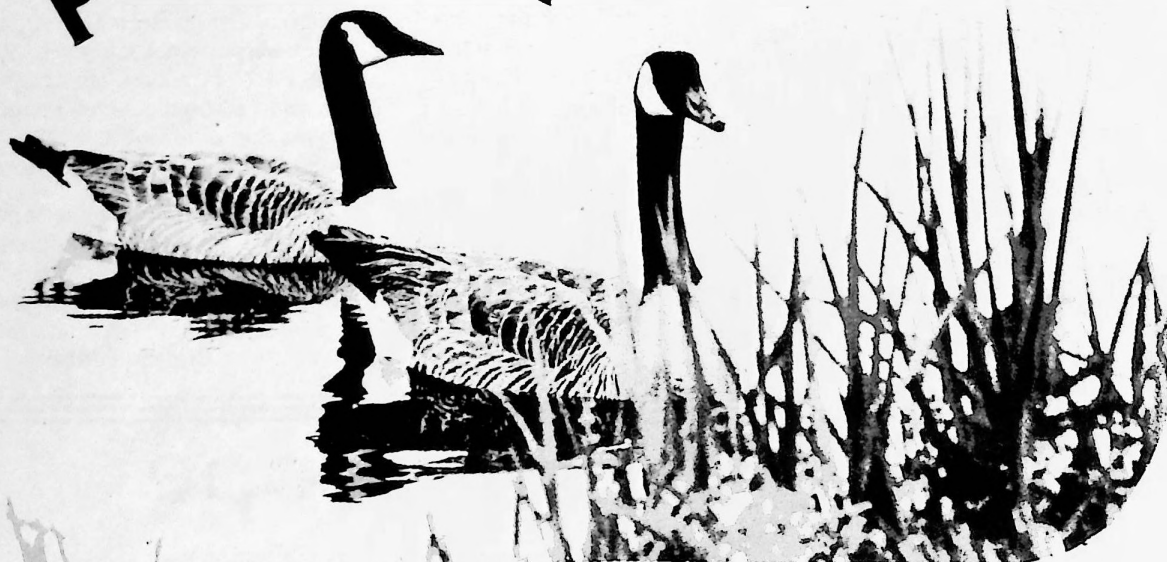
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POETRY



PROVISION

Familiar scene, white-hot dunes.
sun scorched, thirsty sky,
one so solitary walking.
Where and why?

On the horizon, waves of hope
paint shadows, cool greens, pools
blending mirage and vision.
Tricks or tools?

Pamela L. Warford
Kenosha, Wisconsin

JENNIE'S MOTHER

Unleashed passions so forbidden
Exploding silently within my heart
Like shooting stars on a sultry night
Fire rages with the taste of you!
Passion frenzied.
Ecstasy secret
No one must know
of Jennie's Mother.

Touches, glances compelled to be hidden
Binding together to keep us apart
Desolate beaches in the starlight
Stolen moments, oh so few!
The universe unfolds
The earth before us
Yet, no place to be
with Jennie's Mother.

Yearnings tumble forth unbidden
Seeking only one true heart
Shimmering breasts dare to excite
Buried stirrings to rise anew!
Burning pain
Intimate agony
To be in love
with Jennie's Mother.

Morgan
Amherst, Massachusetts

Here is a poem from a survivor. I wrote it years ago after being raped as a teenager, though I didn't call it that then. It was in my own dorm room my first semester of college, and I was too afraid of waking my hall-mates to scream for help.

SILENCES

A closed door
2:30 A.M.
Smooth whispers
Shaking as if in Alaska
Footsteps
Six journal pages
Yet a word to
No one.

Ann E. Horowitz



EDGE SPORT

As I move
outside the circle of expectations,
I float through waves of uncertainty.
Unsure of who I am,
now free of others' wills,
I grope for a handhold,
hanging by a thread of myself
on the rocky cliff of becoming.

Marcella Reis
Santa Cruz, California

What's New at the New Alexandria Lesbian Library

Compiled by Bet Power

The New Alexandria Lesbian Library (NALL), located in Northampton, receives new books, periodicals and videos all the time. Here are just a few too enjoy while visiting the Library. To visit NALL, call 584-7616 a few days in advance.

BOOKS:

*Come Come. Jo Jones, Sheba Feminist Publishers, London, England, 1983.

Jones' humorous first novel about Lesbian love and friendship.

*Ladies Night. Elisabeth Bowers, The Seal Press, Seattle, WA, 1988.

From the "International Women's Crime" series, this mystery introduces private detective Meg Lacey whose search for a missing teenager leads her through Vancouver's seedy nightclubs, "ladies' nights" and a dead body.

*The Last Draw. Elisabet Peterzen, translated from the Swedish by Laura Desertrain, The Seal Press, Seattle, WA, 1988.

Another novel from the "International Women's Crime" series, this mystery is narrated by a husband-and-wife journalist team in pursuit of the killer of seven victims--all men. The murderer turns out to be a woman and this novel probes her motive.

*Macho Sluts. Pat Califia, Alyson Publications, Boston, MA, 1988.

New erotic fiction by the world's most famous S/Mer. Includes seven sizzling stories plus "A Dash of Vanilla" and concise information on Lesbians, AIDS and safer sex. Califia's powerful from-the-heart introduction will anger anyone concerned about sexual liberation and civil rights, and is itself worth the price of the book.

*The Obsidian Mirror. Louise M. Wischild, The Seal Press, Seattle, WA, 1988.

Wischild describes her personal journey as an adult survivor of incest -- the pain of her experience and the power of her healing.

*The Songs of Bilitis. Pierre Louys, English translation by Alvah C. Bessie, Dover Publications, Mineola, NY, 1988.

Originally published in French in Paris in 1894, this classic of erotic literature openly celebrates Lesbian love in 146 beautiful poems. Originally presented as penned by a Greek woman poet of antiquity, Bilitis, the poems were actually crafted by homosexual Louys.

VIDEOS

*"Fantasy Dancer." 20-min., color, erotic. A woman accompanies her boyfriend to a stripshow and ends up getting a lot more out of it than he does!

*"Lesbian Bar Culture." 125-min., color. The official video of the October, 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian & Gay Rights.

*"Sophie: Reclaiming A Past." 15-min., color. Judy Sloan performs as Sophie, an elder Jewish woman who offer us her views on life as researched and recorded in this oral herstory.

*"The Women's Motorcycle Festival Video." 1 hour, color. The events, action and adventure at the 1986 Women's Motorcycle Festival.

PERIODICALS

*"Broomstick," By, For and About Women Over Forty. From San Francisco, CA.

*"Hag Rag," Wisconsin's Lesbian-Feminist Press. From Milwaukee, WI. Thanks to the Hag Rag dykes for recently contributing a complete set of back issues to NALL.

*"Tradeswomen," A Quarterly Magazine for Women in Blue-Collar Work. From San Francisco, CA.

Women and Assault: A Re-written History

by Ellen LaMonte (Willow)

Shortly before the 7th annual Berkshire Take Back the Night March & Rally (September 29, 1988, Pittsfield, MA), two women from western Massachusetts were murdered - one from Pittsfield and one from Greenfield. Since then three more women from our area (Springfield, Greenfield, and Pittsfield) have been killed; another

woman from the Berkshires is missing. The alleged assailants of three of the five women were husbands or boyfriends. At least two women had restraining orders.

Statistically, a woman is murdered by her boyfriend or husband every 22 days in this state. The two most recent murders occurred on the same day. Violence against women is a very public and noticeable occurrence right now in our communities.

In my speech at the rally (which follows) I discussed the attitudes behind the myths and stereotypes about women who are sexually assaulted -- how and why our histories are rewritten for us. Although this article deals with rape in particular, the attitudes and myths work similarly when a woman is a victim of any kind of violence.

I dedicate this piece to those six women and to their own herstories.

When a woman is sexually assaulted her history, to some degree, is rewritten on the spot. Whatever kind of life she had led up to that moment is somehow changed. While it makes sense that her future would be forever changed because of the trauma of rape's violence, why should a woman's past be changed?

No matter what we were doing at the time of the assault, no matter what kind of lifestyle we have had, no matter what kind of a person we may be, our lives are suddenly scrutinized and analyzed and judged. We become typecast both by those close to us -- who deal with their own discomfort by telling us what we should have done differently -- and by a legal system that is often brutally accusatory. We need go no further than newspaper and television reports about rape trials to hear the defense recreate a woman's actions, motives and at times her entire personality. Always we hear that boring refrain, "it couldn't have been rape because..." and you can just fill in the blank.

When a woman in a New Bedford bar was gang-raped a few years ago, it was discovered that she had reported a rape to an emergency room once before. That fact was used to challenge her story that she had been raped again -- as if being raped once is somehow a preventative measure for the future; as if being raped once makes one immune for the rest of one's life. Sometimes our history is rewritten in very subtle ways, putting us on the defensive more unconsciously than the grosser accusations, so that we question the details of our actions.

As women, we are so often punished in this society -- for not being pretty or attractive enough, skinny or fit enough, fashionable or accommodating enough. We can spend a lot of energy looking right and always trying to be "on." Yet, if we are assaulted we are punished again for provoking an act that is called "lust," but which we know to be an act of rage. But we certainly don't have to keep believing the lie that men are helpless victims of the "sudden acceleration" of their hormones, emotions, and passions... you-know-who just couldn't help it again.

That myth has continued to trap us into the guilt and shame that we, as women, are perpetually responsible for other people's actions. And that has put us in the position of constantly apologizing for our actions, our existence. Even when we're not aware of having done anything "wrong," we're still often saying that we're sorry. Notice how many times a day or week you say, "I'm sorry." Just observe without making any judgement about yourself. Notice what kinds of situations in which you apologize. Do you know this one? -- someone bumps into you, and you say, "Oh, I'm sorry..."

In many ways we unconsciously censor our behavior so as not to draw attention or abuse upon ourselves. We try to prevent bad things from happening to us, but most of the time we don't name these things -- we just keep performing deep-seated "prevention" techniques. These techniques don't really work because they focus on the problem being our female selves and behavior. But when we do name the problem to ourselves or others, it is violence against women -- battering, rape, obscene comments. Things we are told -- after the fact -- we were asking for in some way!

And just what is it we are asking for? Tell you what I think, I think it's that "p" word we're supposed to be "asking for."

But how is it that we're asking for "it"? I don't necessarily see a connection between a woman wanting to go to a place for entertainment, food and

drink, and companionship and "just asking for it." Nor do I see a connection between a woman emptying her garbage outside at night and wanting "it." And I don't see a connection between a woman sleeping in her locked apartment in Pittsfield and "begging for it." And I really don't see the connection between a young girl walking to school and "wanting it." No thank you! We have ways as women of being very clear about our needs and what we want, and don't want. The confusion lies in those who keep insisting that we are the ones asking for "it" at every turn in our lives.

For each of us here this evening, there are probably a dozen mundane things we've done today that, if we were assaulted tonight, could be used accusingly against us as evidence that we were, at a minimum, being careless, or worse yet, seriously asking for "it." No thank you!

If we are assaulted, we are punished again for provoking an act that is called 'lust,' but which we know to be an act of rage.

It is exhausting to live in a culture that rewrites our history on the spot when crimes of violence happen to us, and it is even more exhausting to continually edit and censor our behavior. We do not deserve to keep changing our behavior so others will like us better and not feel compelled to harm us.

We are just swell the way we are. If we can begin, or more accurately continue, the process of loving ourselves just as we are, then we can develop an attitude that we expect others to see how swell indeed we are. If we expect others to honor us simply for who we are, we will have freed our energy that was bound up in the fears and criticisms about "gettin' too out of line."

We need to support other women in this process. If you hear a sister being down on herself, let her know she's an all right person and support her in whatever she's going through. If your friend has been hit by her husband or lover, let her know she doesn't deserve it and she needn't be ashamed to tell you. If you've been assaulted and your family starts telling you what you should have done differently, stop them in their tracks -- and let them know you did the best you could under the circumstances. It's not easy at first, but we can change the energy we give off about ourselves.

And we can expect that the world and our community and our families will learn to respect the strength of our power as women.

•Witchcraft, continued from page 1

says they wear a pentagram because they worship Satan, keep walking! That person isn't a witch, and has some false notion as to the true meaning of that symbol. Witches, incidentally, not only don't worship Satan--they don't *believe* in Satan! The devil is a construct of Christian teachings.

My own theory about the blurring of traditions (whereby pentagrams are sometimes associated with Black Magic) has to do with occult fascination; if someone is drawn to learning about magic for the wrong reasons, she/he will very likely take a path which involves her/him with malevolence and evil. If The Craft has a credo, it is this: "Harm no one, and do what you will." In other words, any effort, magical or otherwise, which seeks to interfere with another

human being's existence for manipulative purposes, is intolerable. It is widely held that "bad" magic is brought back to its creator. What goes around, comes around.

By way of gaining more general information, there are several fascinating and wonderful books on the subject, for all levels of interest. A definitive "manual" for contemporary aspirants is Starhawk's *"The Spiral Dance"*. This book offers lively commentary on the "roots" of Neo-Paganism and Goddess worship, and provides specific instructions for performing rituals and meditations, including "tables" of symbols. Also by Starhawk (don't let the name frighten you off--this writer is one gutsy, intelligent woman) is *Dreaming the Dark*, which explores the connections between one's spirituality and political activism. Magic is seen as a tool to enhance personal empowerment which in turn helps develop a confident, energetic attitude

towards world problems.

For the ambitious, Margot Adler's *Drawing Down the Moon* traces, with exacting detail, the history of many different pagan religious traditions, from Druidism to Wicca. There is an especially interesting chapter on feminism and The Craft, and the book's Index lists many newsletters, festivals, and other sources of information. Erica Jong has also written a book, called simply *Witches*. Hardly a scholarly work, but beautiful to behold and entertaining to read, this book is a collaboration with a watercolor artist. Jong includes some of her own poetry along with general, free-flowing commentary on the history of witchcraft, the practice of magic (including love spells--but remember what I said about manipulation) and symbols that many, not just pagans, will recognize. A bookstore in Easthampton, The Abyss, carries many books and supplies. All of the titles I mentioned are available through local bookstores and/or libraries.

Finally, some thoughts on women and The Craft from two local women.

Alexandra (Witch, and co-President of the UMASS Pagan Students Organization): "I find it very positive to have a strong, female deity so that I don't have to bow down to the male patriarchy. But I also think that you can't get anywhere without recognizing the power present in both male and female sensibilities."

Abby: "Paganism has helped me get to my roots. Practicing and learning it has made me feel more aware and secure in my identity as a woman. We live in a male-oriented society, but learning about the Goddess gives me a greater respect for all human beings."

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A place where women survivors of child abuse (sexual, emotional, physical) can exchange information about resources that have helped them in their healing. Do you have a favorite book or article? Do you know of a conference, workshop, or other event of special interest to survivors? We need to know. Send information about your healing resources and your personal impressions of them to Bulletin Board, P.O. Box 295, Northampton, MA 01061.

RESEARCH: A Retrospective View of the Healing Process

Are you an adult woman incest survivor? Would you like to participate in a study to increase our understanding of the healing process? This study, for a clinical social work master's thesis, is about the healing process for adult women incest survivors. Participation will involve completion of a pre-interview questionnaire and one to two interviews. Questions will concern your incest and related history, what difficulties you feel resulted, your recovery process and what you feel have been the particularly difficult parts of healing. Questions about work, family, relationships, sexuality, body image, and self-feeling will be included. Any telephone inquiry you make as well as your participation in the study is confidential. Call Marla Allisan at (413) 586-4222, evenings before 10pm, or leave a message on the machine (caution not necessary).

SPACE NEEDED IN NORTHAMPTON

The women's Survivors of Incest Anonymous group has outgrown its current space. Anyone with info on a space available Wed. nights in Northampton that can hold 30-40 women, please call 586-9485.

RESOURCES

My Father's House by Sylvia Fraser

Of all the places I have sought guidance and support in my recovery from incest, Cosmopolitan was not one of them. But this summer, while waiting for my car to be repaired, I flipped through the July issue and happened on "My Father's House," excerpts from Sylvia Fraser's autobiography. Her ability to verbalize feelings that I had no words for helped me to understand and trust my own process of healing and remembering.

She spends the first piece of the article giving form to the confusing experience of living with hidden memories. In the process of remembering, Fraser continues to reinforce that it is the safety of today that makes possible remembering not only the events, but the feelings of being sexually abused in childhood.

She then describes fragments of

memories and the logic of a child trying to make sense of the events. She writes openly through the shame of incest, the confusion of loving and feeling loved by a father she hates for abusing her.

Incest and Sexuality: A Guide to Understanding and Healing by Wendy Maltz and Beverly Holman. Lexington Books 1987.

"Incest survivors want to resolve the issue of sexuality yet they don't want to go near it," writes Nancy Evergreen, M.A., Incest Treatment Specialist. If Ms. Evergreen's comment "feels" familiar to you, perhaps this book could be a helpful resource as you work toward healing.

Incest and Sexuality: A Guide to Understanding and Healing, is a book of valuable insights and practical self-help, as some of the chapter titles indicate: "Effects of Incest on Self Concept," "Anxieties About Relationships," "How Incest Affects Sexuality," "How Survivors Can Help Themselves," "Survivors and Partners Working Together."

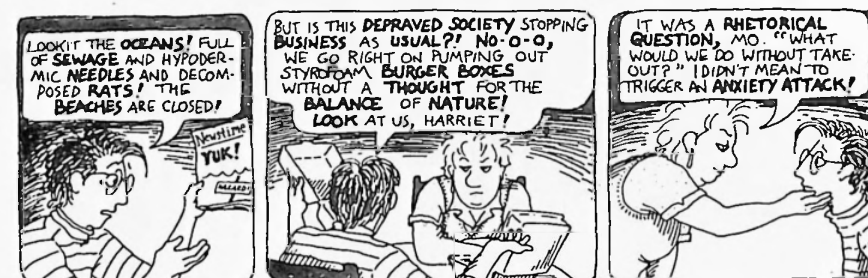
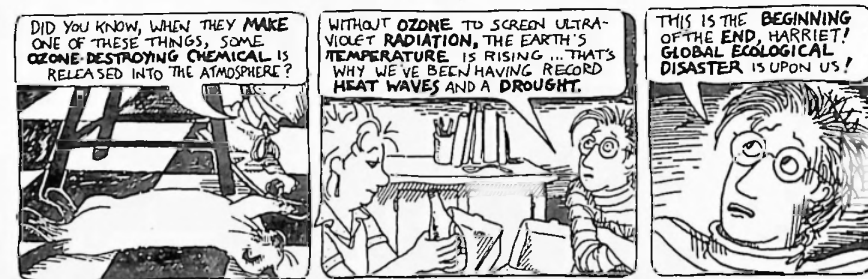
I have found this book a gentle guide, addressing and validating many of my experiences and concerns. This book is sensitively written without compromising the issues. It is a splendid resource for survivors, partners, and therapists.

Conspiracy of Silence: The Trauma of Incest by Sandra Butler, Volcano Press

In the ten years since Conspiracy of Silence was published, much has been written about this all too frequent phenomenon. Earlier it was often assumed that incest was a problem confined to "other" kinds of families - a classist and often racist assumption. Butler's scholarly though readable work broke the silence. It challenged this and other myths as well as the misogynist blaming of the victims/survivors and mothers. During her research she listened to women whose stories flowed out to her and recognized the incest as abuse and assault. These accounts are included in the text as are references to the work of other pioneers in this field such as Judith Herman, Lisa Hirschman, Florence Rush and Suzanne Scrogi.

I want to share this book in order to salute Sandra Butler. I highly recommend the writing workshops she offers to promote healing.

Dykes to Watch Out For



Sponsored by Maddy Cahill and local cartoonist, Rob Ranney.

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Are You For RU-486?

by Jane Doe

RU486 is a drug which, when administered in the early stages of pregnancy, induces miscarriage. Such drugs are known as abortifacients, and utilize both hormonal and chemical-reactive properties. The drug is available in France and the Netherlands, and is currently being tested in Great Britain and other parts of Europe.

Recent newspaper articles report that pharmaceutical companies in France are removing RU486 from the market, in anticipation of American boycotts of all their products.

Proponents of RU486 claim it is an effective and safe alternative to dilation-and-curettage or vacuum-aspiration procedures. Opponents of RU486 call it "the abortion pill," and project its use will make abortion a "painless, effortless" endeavor, thus making it very attractive as a form of birth control.

Addressing that opposition, I'll say this: any woman with even vestigial knowledge of her reproductive organs knows that an abortion, whether induced or spontaneous, poses inherent risks. A woman who has more than one pregnancy terminated in her lifetime diminishes her chances for having a "healthy" pregnancy (this also happens to be true of other forms of stress affecting the uterus: endometriosis, cervical cancer, and venereal disease). No one should consider abortion a viable form of "birth control". Termination is inherently dangerous, as is childbirth, because of the stress it introduces in the body.

One significant advantage of RU486 over other termination procedures is that it does not require the insertion of instruments into the uterus, thus greatly reducing the probability of infection (the most common side effect of surgical abortions). Also--RU486 eliminates the need for anaesthetic, since this method induces miscarriage gradually and allows the body to respond appropriately, thus minimizing trauma (at a time when a woman's hormones are already causing undue stress).

However...this method is not "painless." And it is far from "effortless." I know from experience. I received the treatment in Europe this past summer.

I think it was very fortunate that I was living in a city whose largest hospital was taking part in a nation-wide testing of RU486. Very fortunate that I found some very supportive professionals, medical and otherwise, to advise me. Very fortunate that I was "so early on," as my doctor said, since RU486 is not usually administered beyond the seventh or eighth week of pregnancy. And, since I was living on limited funds, I was very fortunate to be in a country that does not charge exorbitant medical costs, particularly since I didn't have adequate insurance coverage.

Before I received this treatment, before I found out I was pregnant, before I went to Europe, I had, of course, read about RU486. I was intrigued, as well as irritated, by all the controversy surrounding it. I suppose this was to be expected--France was also first to approve the "morning after" pill, too, weren't they? I had never dreamed I'd experience any of it first-hand. I feel as though I've played a role, however small, in medical history...and it was very exciting, at the time, even in the midst of the stress and the pain.

And now, back in the United States, confronted with evidence that this nation is violently (in most cases) opposed to testing, approval, or distribution of this drug, I find myself torn.

Torn between my belief that only a woman can control her own fertility, and my certainty that many people will be deceived by the apparent "simplicity" that characterizes RU486.

Here's the thing: and I'm going to be very candid here, so don't say I didn't warn you.

With "traditional" abortion methods (by that, I mean those practiced legally by doctors for the last fifteen years), the actual contact a woman has with the products of fertilization (call it a cell-divider, a fetus, whatever) is minimal. This is because of the use of technologically-advanced equipment and the efficiency of trained medical practitioners. To put it in simpler terms: there isn't usually much blood to cope with (this I know from experience, too).

Tampon Absorbency Labelling: What Consumers Should Know

by Esther R. Rome
for the Boston Women's Health Book Collective

Women have an opportunity right now to tell the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that they want clear and simple absorbency labeling on tampon boxes so they can reduce their risk of toxic shock syndrome (TSS). Unfortunately, even though TSS does not make the news anymore, women still die from it.

TSS is a rare, yet serious disease that affects mainly menstruating women using tampons. The use of more absorbent tampons is associated with a higher risk of getting TSS. Teenagers, who are most at risk for TSS and perhaps the least educated about it, may be the most vulnerable group.

Immediate symptoms, which can come on in a matter of hours, include a fever over 102 degrees, nausea, diarrhea, dizziness or fainting. Prompt medical attention is needed.

The Good Part

The FDA recently proposed a requirement to test and label tampon absorbencies. The proposal includes a letter rating system of "A" for the least absorbent to "F" for the most absorbent. There also is a fine print explanation of how to compare the absorbencies of different tampons.

This uniform absorbency rating is important since the terms "regular," "super," and "super plus" are meaningless for understanding the absorbency of a tampon. Manufacturers themselves call these words style terms, not absorbency terms. For instance, according to the latest independent tests, completed in February 1987, ob brand "regular" is more absorbent than Tampax and Kotex "super" and nearly twice as absorbent as Playtex and Tampax "regular."

Some manufacturers already print a single number, sunscreen-like rating, on the boxes. The number is based on the grams of salt water that the tampon can absorb.

The single number system, however, is too precise to reflect what you really find on the store shelves. Testing of tampons currently on the market reveals sufficient variation from one box of the same type of tampon to another that an exact absorbency number is misleading. Although a woman should reasonably expect that a box of "9" tampons would be less absorbent than a box of "10's," this is not necessarily so.

In the FDA's proposal each letter will represent a small range of absorbencies. A box of "B's" will nearly always be less than a box of "C's." The proposed letter ranges would more accurately describe what you are buying.

The Bad Part

Unfortunately, another part of the proposal allows contradictory labeling, undermining the regulation's

RU486 begins to work within a few hours of being ingested, although the time it takes varies from woman to woman. For this reason, a woman must appropriate all of the products herself. I don't want to underemphasize the sobering effect of this experience. There is no way to "ignore" or "forget" it, because the evidence is there in front of you.

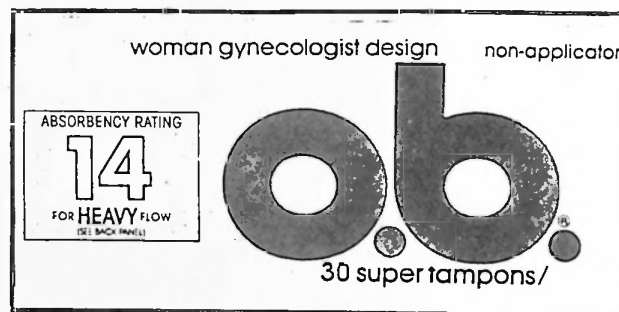
Now, I'm not attempting to moralize here. On the contrary, I firmly believe a woman's sense of relief or reassurance can be compounded by this necessary scrutiny of her body's responses. Her decision to terminate (often wrought with emotional turmoil, guilt or fear), if it was the right decision for her, is reinforced. There is certainly nothing "painless" or "effortless" in this realization.

Personally, I am not squeamish about blood. For me, the trauma of anaesthetic injected into the cervix, metal rods used to force dilation, and the use of vacuums or steel curettes to remove tissue from my uterus, are all far more horrifying than the knowledge that my body is slowly, naturally expelling that tissue. I am far more horrified by surgical instruments than I

purpose: the terms "regular," "super," and "super plus" can be combined with any of the letter ratings. For instance, if the proposed labeling were applied to the products now on the market there would be a super B and a regular C. The C category would have a "regular" and several "supers" and "super pluses."

Women who understand the significance of absorbency ratings will be able to tell which tampons are more absorbent by ignoring the style terms, only paying attention to the letter rating. But many women will be confused. No one should have to study the fine print to find out something this important.

The only way to avoid confusion is to standardize or eliminate the terms "regular," etc. In fact, a number of years ago the FDA suggested this. The agency



quickly reversed itself when the tampon manufacturers objected. It is extremely important that two different messages about absorbency do not appear on the boxes. If the FDA is serious about reducing the incidence of TSS then it needs to revise this part of its absorbency labeling proposal.

Consumer groups, particularly the Boston Women's Health Book Collective (authors of *The New Our Bodies, Ourselves*), have participated in the development of the proposed tampon absorbency ratings. For four years the Collective and other consumer groups worked with the tampon manufacturers and the FDA at the agency's request, to develop an absorbency rating system as part of a voluntary tampon standard.

Our work has convinced us that tampon absorbency labeling must be simple and clear so that women can choose less absorbent tampons to lower their risk of toxic shock syndrome (TSS). We know that the FDA can be swayed if it receives enough letters from consumers.

What You Can Do

We urge consumers to write the FDA both to support the proposed letter rating system and to push for the standardization or elimination of the terms "regular," etc. Comments can be sent to the FDA at Dockets Management Branch (HFA-84), FDA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857 until December 22, 1988. Refer to Docket No. 86N-0479. Please also send a copy of your letter to the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 47 Nichols Avenue, Watertown, MA 02172.

am by my bodily fluids.

Some may have found that last paragraph needlessly graphic. But I think being abstract about this is useless. In a country where the "Right to Life" is so hotly debated, I think we need to get at what "life" is; and that includes honesty about our bodies, our emotions and our decisions. It is crucial to remember that a woman's capacity to create life is a power that must be tempered with sound judgments...

I think RU486 is an important drug. The tests being done are, in my opinion, stringent, comprehensive and professional. The follow-up evaluations, which continue for months after treatment, seem designated to accurately pinpoint any and all potential side effects. RU486 is "the future," my doctor said. I agree. The future should not be buried before we can attempt to discover and evaluate its virtues.

NOTE: Anyone wanting more information about RU486, please address inquiries to "Jane Doe" at the Valley Women's Voice, Room 321, S.U.B.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Lend a Hand

Relief efforts are underway in Western Massachusetts for the hurricane devastated areas of Nicaragua where over 180,000 homeless people are in need of shelter, food, clothing and medicine. Hurricane Relief For Nicaragua, a Western Massachusetts coalition of peace and justice groups in the Pioneer Valley are seeking donations of hand tools, plastic sheeting, tents, light clothing, blankets, vegetable oil, rice and baby food, as well as antibiotics. Such items can be dropped off at the barn at Maplewood Organic Farm on Belchertown Road in Amherst. Donation of money earmarked "hurricane relief" can be sent to Northampton Committee on Central America, P.O. Box 1261, Northampton, Ma. 01061. Those interested in going to the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua to help in relief efforts can call 628-4673. People wishing to go down to help should be in good health and ready for hard work.

South Asian Lesbian Networking

Anyone interested in forming a **SOUTH ASIAN LESBIAN NETWORK** in the East Coast or nationally, should write to: Poonam, P.O. Box 3048, NY, NY, 10008.

\$\$\$ for Women's Research

The **Elizabeth Cady Stanton Foundation** announces a new fund, the Corinne Guntzel Memorial Fund, to support projects and research in women's history. The fund is now accepting applications for awards which range from \$250-\$500. Deadline for applications is Feb. 15, 1989. Write to Harlene Gilbert, c/o The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Foundation, Box 603, Seneca Falls, NY 13148.

Disowned Lesbians

Stories are sought for severed ties: **Lesbians Losing Friends, Losing Families**, an anthology on disowned Lesbians, and the effects of the fear of being disowned. For more information, write to P.O. Box 332, Portsmouth, NH, 03801.

Anthology Submissions Sought

Writers seek stories for an anthology about Lesbian Ceremonies of Commitment. Want to include stories of/by midlife and long-living lesbians--those who only recently participated in such ceremonies, and those who had them long before it was even marginally "acceptable". Pre-Stonewall especially encouraged. Becky Butler and Pat Bralley, 1309 McLendon Avenue, Atlanta, Ga. 30307.

Lesbian Separatist Conference

The **Second Annual Lesbian Separatist Conference and Gathering** will be held June 15-18, 1989 near Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The 4-day conference will provide Lesbian Separatists the opportunity to exchange ideas, present papers, participate in workshops and discussions, play, expand separatist networks and spark new friendships. The sliding scale registration fee of \$85-\$150 covers everything, including lodging and meals. A limited number of work exchange slots are available. For more information, contact: Burning Bush, P.O. Box 3065, Madison, WI, 53704-0065.

Submissions Invited

The deadline for submissions to **The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism**, is January 1, 1989. Maximum length 25-30 double-spaced pages. Send 5 copies to: Sharon Day, 444 Lafayette, St. Paul, MN, 55155.

Violence against Women/Children

A special topic issue of **GENDER AND SOCIETY** will focus on physical and psychological violence against women and children. For a copy of the complete call for papers write: Judith Lorber, Editor, **GENDER AND SOCIETY**, Sociology Dept., CUNY Graduate Center, 33 West 42nd St., NY, NY 10036.

Newsletter for Bisexuals

The **Valley Bisexual Network Newsletter** will be published on a monthly basis. We welcome submissions from the bisexual community (coming out stories, calendar listing, drawings, etc). The Newsletter is free, yet we will gladly accept donations to help cover our costs. Write: Susan Morgan, c/o LBGA--SUB rm. 413, U. Mass., Amherst, Ma., 01103

Lifeline in Northampton

Lifeline Institute, Inc., a four-year-old resource/referral agency that serves the Western Massachusetts gay, lesbian and bisexual community has moved to Northampton. Lifeline's new address is: 16 Center Street, 3rd floor, Room 308, Northampton, Ma. 01060. Lifeline message phone number is (413) 586-9698. Lifeline is currently seeking volunteers to work on a hotline Thursday and Sunday evenings as well as volunteers/board members interested in developing and executing workshops and fundraisers. Anyone interested should call the phone message number.

Catholic Lesbian Conference

Conference for Catholic Lesbians. National Network. **IMAGES, QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER.** For more information write: CCL, P.O. Box 436, Planetarium Station, New York, NY 10024.

AIDS Support

Jewish Family Service has recently announced two new confidential and free support groups: the first for persons with AIDS and persons with ARC, and the second for professional care givers of persons with AIDS. Call David Austen, Clinical Social Worker, at (413) 737-2601.

NALL Seeks Volunteers

The New Alexandria Lesbian Library, located in Northampton, needs Lesbians to help with archiving books, back issue periodicals and subject files. No experience necessary; just a willingness to learn a Lesbian-made processing system. Flexible work times can be arranged. NALL is also looking for two women to coordinate open Library hours for 4-6 hours once or twice each week during weekdays. Student credit in Women's/Lesbian Studies may be arranged. Call (413) 584-7616 today to help with the important work of preserving and making available our Lesbian Herstory!

Couples Newsletter

PARTNERS: THE NEWSLETTER FOR GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES is an eight-page monthly, offering interviews, news and information to help gay and lesbian couples develop satisfying and successful relationships. To subscribe (and/or participate in Partners' national survey) write: The Newsletter of Gay and Lesbian Couples, Box 9685, Seattle, WA 98109.

Call for Poems

Poetry solicited for anthology: **Bubbe Meisehs by Shayna Maidelehs.** Jewish women are invited to submit poetry about their grandmothers. Send SASE to: Leslea Newman, 50 Hawley St. Apt 2, Northampton, MA 01060.

Adult Daughters

Ongoing therapy group for adult daughters of addicted, emotionally ill, or abusive parents. Monday evenings 7:30 - 9:00 in N'ton. \$20.00 per session, some lower cost spots, some insurance accepted. Facilitated by Mary Frances Platt. 323-5088.

Welfare Mother's Voices

Welfare Mother's Voice, a newspaper by, for and about AFDC moms, is looking for contributions of personal stories, news, art/graphics, childrearing tips, home remedies, letters, poetry, bragging or bitching by current or former AFDC moms who agree to write from experience, not theory, about the truth in their lives. Payment is a free subscription. Send to: Welfare Mother's Voice, 4504 N. 47, Milwaukee, WI, 53218. Subscriptions \$4 to AFDC moms and very low-income mothers; \$8 other individuals, \$15 organizations. All prices are more if you can, less if you can't.

classifieds

CARPENTRY

Experienced general carpenter. Also ceramic tiling, painting. Call Sue 413-527-7771

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Reduce stress * fatigue * increase circulation. Beth Holt LMT/CMT (413) 584-9016

HELP WANTED

CPA FIRM NEEDS OFFICE ASSISTANT. Part-time, temporary. Potential for permanent position. Office experience a plus. Woman identified office. Send letter and/or resume to: Linda Shear, CPA, 16 Center St., Suite 318, Northampton, MA 01060, 413-586-0618.

Child-loving woman needed for one or two evenings per week, for childcare of two girls, 3 and 7 -- car a plus--268-7731.

CLASSIFIEDS .25 per word

Classifieds must be received by the 22nd of the month preceeding publication. Sorry, we cannot accept classifieds over the phone.

Category heading:

Please type or print ad neatly.

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X 25¢/word _____
Cost per month _____
Number of months to run _____
TOTAL COST _____

Payment--check, cash, or money order--must accompany ad.

We cannot run your ad without this information, which will remain confidential.

Name: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____

DRESS TO THRILL

Saturday, December 10, 8 p.m.

"Dress to Thrill Leather and Lace Posing Party," hosted by SHELIX, a New England Woman-to-Woman S/M Support Group for Lesbians and Bisexual Women. Chem-free. New Women welcome. (413) 584-7616 or send SASE to: SHELIX, PO Box 416, Florence Station, Northampton, MA 01060-1416 for info and location. Wheelchair Accessible.

WOMEN'S CRAFTS MARKET

Saturday/Sunday December 3-4, 10-11, 17-18

Area women displaying and selling their creations. Each day features different women and different crafts. At Lunaria in Northampton. For details call (413) 586-7851. Voice or tty/tdd

THEATRE

December 8-10, 14-17 8 pm.

Getting Out, an account of a woman's first day on the "outside" after eight years in prison. Directed by Margaret Mead. Rand Theatre at UMASS. Tickets \$4/\$3 students. (413) 545-2511 or 545-2056. Wheelchair Accessible.

BAKE SALE FUNDRAISER

Tuesday, December 13, 9-4pm

Valley Bisexual Network hosts a fundraiser bake sale. Campus Center Lobby at U. Mass. For more information, call (413) 586-7699.

NECESSITIES CELEBRATES

Friday, December 16, 7pm

10th anniversary party, all women welcome. Speakers Jean Grossholz and Iris Garcia; performances by Justine and Joyce, Andrea Hairston and friends. Children's activities until 10pm. Amherst College Alumni House. 586-1125 for info.

WOMEN'S COFFEEHOUSE

Friday December 16, 8pm

The Women's Coffeehouse will hold a winter celebration, featuring a surprise guest. All women welcome to the festivities! 46 Pleasant St., Cambridge, MA. 354-8807 for info.

BISEXUAL MEETING/POTLUCK

Sunday, December 18, 12 noon

The Valley Bisexual Network holds a meeting (12 noon) and potluck (1pm) the third Sunday of each month. Feel free to attend either or both. Contact Susan (413) 586-7699 for location.



Jennifer Lavenhar and Jami L. Miller in Getting Out.

POTLUCK FOR LESBIANS OF COLOR

Sunday, December 18

"De Colores/Lesbians of Color" potluck. For time, location and information, call Everywoman's Center (413) 545-0883.

GODDESS STUDY

January, 1989

Ritual/experiential workshop to bring specific goddesses into ourselves. Costume, role-playing, guided meditation. Call Penelope: (413) 774-3982.

LESBIAN CO-COUNSELING

Monday, January 9, 7pm

An introductory talk about re-evaluation counselling (co-counseling). Presentation of basic theory followed by the opportunity to sign up for an introductory class for lesbians. At the Mansion on Solar Hill, 61 Western Ave., Brattleboro. For info/directions call (802) 257-9355.

CALENDAR

616 DANCE ♀ ♀ BAR ♀ CATERING TO WOMYN AND THEIR FRIENDS

616 So. Amherst Road, South Hadley, MA
Located on route 116 between Amherst and Mt. Holyoke Colleges
413-534-7720



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LESBIAN VIDEO PARTY

Sunday Dec. 18, 2pm-midnight

Celebrate the New Alexandria Lesbian Library's 14th Anniversary at the Benefit Lesbian Video Party with an all-day festival of new lesbian videos and a vegetarian potluck. You may choose to bring a book from the library's "wish-list" or pay the \$5-\$7 sliding scale fee at the door.

Personal and Political:

2:00 Lesbian Tongues
2:30 Sophie, Reclaiming a Past
2:45 Whoopie Goldberg: The Broadway Show
4:00 Lesbian Bar Culture
4:30 Just Because of Who We Are
5:00 Part of the USA
5:30 Women's Motorcycle Festival '86

6:30 Vegetarian Potluck

Lesbian Erotica:

7:30 Section from Burlesk Live
8:00 Fantasy Dancer
8:30 International Ms. Leather Contests. 87, '88
9:30 Private Pleasures
10:00 Shadows
10:30 Fun with a Sausage
11:00 Clips

For more info., call 413-584-7616.

WOMEN'S TRANSFORMATION

January 13 - 21

Through story-telling, guided meditation, psycho-drama, music, play, and ritual, we will deepen inner guidance, increase skills in planetary journeying, celebrate our personal power and our commitment to planetary healing. Eight day training session limited to ten women. Cost: \$350, negotiable. Telephone interview required. (413) 774-3982 or 774-5952.

HEART'S DESIRE

Wednesday, January 25

Womancentering: the Healing Path of the Heart: We are living in a time of re-valuing the heart as the center of truth. Through ritual, journal-writing, guided visualization, expression and affirmation, we will reclaim our hearts. Contact Julie (413) 774-3982.